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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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# An Overview of Surface Water Quality Standards in Louisiana

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# Where are Water Quality Standards Found?

## State

- Louisiana Administrative Code (LAC) Title 33, Part IX, Chapter 11.
- <https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/resources/category/regulations-lac-title-33>

## Federal

- Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 131.
- <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=pt40.24.131&rgn=div5>



# What is A Water Quality Standard?

- An established set of provisions consisting of antidegradation requirements (policy and/or procedures), designated uses, and water quality criteria (narrative or numeric) to protect the designated uses and general policies included at the state's discretion, in order to meet the objectives in section 101(a) of the Clean Water Act.

# What is the Purpose of Water Quality Standards?

- To provide for the protection and preservation of the abundant natural resources of Louisiana's many and varied aquatic ecosystems,
- To protect the public health and welfare that might otherwise be threatened by degradation of water quality,
- To protect or enhance the quality of public waters for designated uses, and
- To serve the objectives of the Louisiana Water Control Law and Federal Clean Water Act

# Three Components of Water Quality Standards

- Designated uses
- Water quality criteria
- Antidegradation



# Designated Uses

- Recreational uses
  - Primary contact recreation (full body immersion; e.g., swimming)
  - Secondary contact recreation (incidental exposure; e.g., skin contact)
- Aquatic life uses
  - Fish and wildlife propagation
  - Limited aquatic life
  - Oyster propagation
- Other uses
  - Drinking water supply
  - Agriculture
  - Outstanding natural resource waters



# Application of Designated Uses

- The state is divided into hydrological units called subsegments.
- Each subsegment will have unique designated uses.
- A listing and description of designated uses per subsegment are found at LAC 33:IX.1123 Table 3.



# Water Quality Criteria

- Protection of aquatic life
- Protection of human health
- General water quality criteria
  - Mostly narrative, with some exceptions.
- Numerical water quality criteria
  - Provide specific numeric values.



# General Water Quality Criteria

- General water quality criteria are found at LAC 33:IX.1113.A
- General aquatic life criteria
  - Nutrients, turbidity, flow, biological and aquatic community integrity.
- General human health criteria
  - Aesthetics, organoleptic effects, radioactive materials.

# Numerical Water Quality Criteria

- Numerical water quality criteria are described at LAC 33:IX.1113.C & listed in Tables 1, 1A, and 3.
- Numerical aquatic life and human health criteria are based on either lethal or negative effect concentrations of toxic substances.

# Antidegradation

- Degradation is a lowering of water quality, as demonstrated by data analysis, water quality models, or other scientifically defensible method.
- Antidegradation Policy can be found at LAC 33:IX.1109.
- Antidegradation Implementation Plan can be found at LAC 33:IX.1119.
- Sections have been updated to conform to federal rule to improve and clarify terminology and regulatory language.



# Continuous Planning/ Revision Process

- Water quality standards are not fixed for all time, but are subject to revision
- Water quality standards are always under review. Results of new toxicity studies, additional data collection, and improved methods for establishing criteria are continually developed.
- The triennial review process allows states to consider these updates.

# Triennial Review

- The state shall hold public hearings at least once every three years to review applicable water quality standards and, as appropriate, modify and adopt standards.
- LDEQ initiates the process by requesting input from the public. Comments are reviewed, formally addressed, and used to set priorities for water quality standards revisions for the next three years.
- A report of findings will be drafted describing these efforts; all Clean Water Act 304(a) Recommendations will be addressed even if they were not mentioned during the comment period.



# Current Status of the Triennial Review

- Final rule to be published in the November Louisiana Register.
- Final rule certification package will be sent to EPA for approval.
- Changes in last triennial review will be mirrored in Water Quality Management Plan.
- Next triennial review cycle will start soon after approval of certification package.

# Contact Information

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